

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested. Applicant has addressed every ground for rejection in the Office Action dated November 15, 2002, and believes the application is now in condition for allowance.

The present invention generally relates to a system for organizing Internet information based on discrete geographic and topical categories, and more particularly to a substantially automatic system for organizing Internet information based on discrete geographic and topical categories which permits users to obtain information regarding business or merchants from a particular geographic area who place information on the system. Moreover, merchants may access the system to input information about the merchant's business into one or more of the geographic areas and topical categories. Automatically listing themselves on the system thereby simplifies the process and reduces the overall cost of advertising for the merchants. The present invention further relates to a system that permits merchants to conduct commercial transactions with users or Shoppers using the system. Information that may be listed by the merchant includes, but is not limited to, advertising, coupons, business listings and job opportunities. Revenue may be generated through use of the system through, among other things, the listing of the merchant information in the geographic areas and topical categories and advertising. The system also permits consumers to buy and/or sell items based on a particular geographic area or areas.

The claims have been amended to more clearly describe the present invention. Specifically, Claim 1 has been amended to clarify that the means for selecting the

geographic locations and categories in which to display the advertising and/or business listings enables the merchant to geographically target the users of the system. Claim 9 has been amended to be rewritten in independent format to include the limitations of Claims 1 and 2, as amended; Claim 11 has been amended to depend from Claim 9; Claim 15 has been amended to depend from Claim 14; and Claims 46 through 75 have been added.

Applicant respectfully elects Species I. It is submitted that Claims 1 through 15, as amended, and Claims 46 through 75 are readable on this species.

Claims 1-8 and 10-15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Rosen et al U.S. Patent No. 6,118,449 and Hanson et al U.S. Patent No. 5,974,398. Rosen discloses a system for modifying a cursor image for advertising purposes. The cursor image corresponds to the content received by the user terminal. Hanson is directed to a system whereby companies direct advertisements to consumers based on their demographic information. Customer image profiles and service usage data are collected and used to allow business to “bid” on the amount of money that they will pay to have the consumer view the advertisement. The system reviews and organizes the bids submitted by the companies and provides them to the consumer to allow the consumer to choose which bids to view.

It is believed that Claim 1, and all claims depending therefrom, are allowable over the Rosen and the Hanson references because neither reference, nor any of the other prior art references of record, teaches or suggests each and every limitation in the claim. In particular, both references fail to teach, among other things, means for the substantially automated creation of business listings and/or advertising by users of the system, and

means for substantially automated selection by said merchants of the categories and geographic locations in which to display the advertising and business listings. In fact, neither reference teaches the substantially automated creation of business listings by merchants. Rather, Rosen merely teaches the use of cursor images and/or banner advertising, and not the creation of business listings. Further, the references also do not teach or suggest the ability of merchants, when creating their business listings, to select the particular geographic and topical categories to list their business listing on the interactive web site to enable the geographic targeting of consumers by the merchants.

Further, Rosen, unlike the present invention, does not teach organizing or listing business information into a hierarchy of geographic areas and topical categories, whereby a consumer may select a particular geographic area and topical category in order to view the business information that was created by the merchant. Instead, Fig. 8 from Rosen shows a search engine that may be used to search the web for information. The use of search engines has several problems, including the problems that the quality of the search becomes dependent on the metatags and/or keywords employed by the merchants' web pages, and a search often will result in too many results. As a result, a search engine will likely include results that do not match up with the user's request and/or will not include listings that would match up with the user's request. The present invention solves these problems by allowing the merchant to place its information on the system according to selected geographic locations and categories. Rather than have the system search for information from web pages in an attempt to find matches, the present system will list the information provided by the merchants by geographic location and categories.

Accordingly, the present invention will allow the users to find business information that is specifically related to the geographic locations and categories that they select.

Additionally, Hanson does not teach listing business listings, advertising and other information on the basis of geographic and topical categories, whereby users may select a particular geographic location area and then a topic or category to find a particular listing or advertisement. Rather, the system teaches the possible use of demographic databases to provide information to advertisers. The advertisers then elect whether they want to offer advertisements to the users. Such a form of advertising is highly inefficient because it sends advertisements to many consumers who have no interest in the products or services, thereby, among other things, possibly upsetting consumers, and it also does not include other consumers, based solely on their demographic information, who may be interested in the products or services. Further, incorrectly entered information by the consumers will likely lead to the advertisers overlooking them. The system also does not take into consideration the travel of consumers as the only geographic information that may be contained in the database are the consumers' hometowns. Thus, unlike the present invention, under the teaching of Hanson, consumers will not be able to view or receive advertising information pertaining to business in the towns in which they may be visiting. As Rosen and Hanson, individually or in combination, fail to teach each and every limitation of Claim 1, it is respectfully submitted that Claim 1, and those claims depending therefrom, are patentably distinct over Rosen and Hanson.

Claims 11 and 15 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 on the basis that certain terms lack antecedent basis. Per the Examiner's suggestions, Claim 11 has been

amended to depend from Claim 9 and Claim 15 has been amended to depend from Claim 14. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that this rejection be withdrawn.

As Claim 9 was deemed allowable over the prior art of record, Claim 9 has been amended to include the limitations from which it depends. Accordingly, it is submitted that Claim 9 and all the claims depending therefrom, are patentable over the prior art and should be allowed.

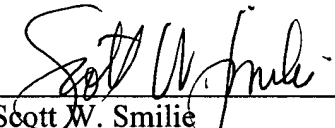
Finally, to more clearly define the unique features of the present invention, new Claims 46 through 75 have been added. Applicant respectfully submits that new Claims 46 through 75 are patentably distinct from all of the references of record. In particular, each of the references of record fails to teach or suggest, among other things, an interactive web site that allows merchants to input their information into geographic areas and topical categories that they specifically choose, which, in turn, allows consumers to access the merchant information by selecting from the plurality of geographic areas and topical categories listed on the series of Internet web pages. The present invention thus overcomes the problems present in search engines through, among other things, the elimination of the reliance on metatags and keywords, and by allowing merchants to specifically direct their advertising and other information to specific geographic areas. Therefore, because all of the above references of record, either alone or in combination, fail to teach or suggest Applicant's invention as claimed in new Claims 46 through 75, Applicant respectfully submits that the new claims are patentably distinct over the prior art of record. Allowance of the new claims is therefore respectfully requested.

Applicant submits that in view of the above-identified amendments and supporting remarks, the claims in their present amended form are patentably distinct over the cited prior art. Allowance of the amended claims is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner discover that there are remaining issues that could be resolved by an interview, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

1. [Once amended] An on-line, interactive web site information system having one of more functions for displaying advertising, information and business listings and referring users such as shoppers or merchants to the web sites of merchants listed with respect to certain geographic locations such as towns and cities, and certain categories, comprising:

means for substantially automated creation of said business listings and advertising by users of said system;

means for substantially automated selection by said merchants of said categories and said geographic locations [towns] wherein said advertising, information and/or business listings will appear so as to enable geographic targeting of said users of said system;

means for displaying said advertising, information and/or business listings for a duration of time;

means for viewing said advertising, information and/or business listings by said users based on a selection by the user of at least one of said geographic locations and at least one of said categories in which the merchant advertisements, business listings and/or information is displayed;

means for linking said advertising, business listings and/or information to the web pages of others;

at least one-hyper link corresponding to a category to link users to the web site of
at least one merchant;

means for building databases from the information provided by users of the
system;

means for recording and providing account review information to users of the
system;

means for users to add and delete said information, business listings and
advertisements for display on the system;

[means for selecting the towns and categories in which to display said advertising,
business listings and information;]

extended services means;

means for recording statistics about usage of the system; and,
marketing analysis means for monitoring activity among the various functions of the
system.

9. [Once amended] [The invention according to Claim 2 wherein said] An on-line,
interactive web site information system having one of more functions for displaying
advertising, information and business listings and referring users such as shoppers or
merchants to the web sites of merchants listed with respect to certain geographic
locations such as towns and cities, and certain categories, comprising:

means for substantially automated creation of said business listings and
advertising by users of said system;

means for substantially automated selection by said merchant of said categories and said geographic locations wherein said advertising, information and/or business listings will appear so as to enable geographic targeting of said users of said system;

means for displaying said advertising, information and/or business listings by said users;

means for viewing said advertising, information and/or business listings based on a selection by the user of at least one of said geographic locations and at least one of said categories in which the merchant advertisements, business listings and/or information is displayed;

means for linking said advertising, business listings and/or information to the web pages of others;

at least one-hyper link corresponding to a category to link users to the web site of at least one merchant;

means for building databases from the information provided by users of the system;

means for recording and providing account review information to users of the system;

means for users to add and delete said information, business listings and advertisements for display on the system;

means for selecting the towns and categories in which to display said advertising, business listings and information;

extended services means;

means for recording statistics about usage of the system;

marketing analysis means for monitoring activity among the various functions of the system;

means for generating revenue from said usage of said system comprising:

- [a.] fees from merchants for listing their web sites in specific towns;
- [b.] fees from banner ads displayed in specific towns;
- [c.] fees from coupons made available in specific towns;
- [d.] fees from [4] for sale listings displayed in specific towns; and
- [e.] fees from extended service; and

accounting means for keeping track of the revenue created by the system and any commissions owed to others.

11. [Once amended] The invention according to Claim [5]9 wherein said [4]for sale listings further include means to offer items for sale on a best offer basis.

15. [Once amended] The invention according to Claim 14 wherein said means for indicating that there are no links to business web pages in a given category comprises an area having the appearance of a darkened button.

46. [New] An on-line, interactive web site information system for allowing information to be inputted by merchants and accessed by consumers based on geographic areas and topical categories, the system comprising:

a series of Internet web pages having information organized into a hierarchy of geographic areas, wherein the geographic areas include at least one geographic area of

large expanse and a plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse organized into a plurality of topical categories;

a web server for displaying the series of Internet web pages;

means for the merchants to input the information onto the series of Internet web pages, wherein the means for inputting the information comprises means for selecting the geographic areas and topical categories to list and/or display the information;

means for the consumers to select at least one of the topical categories in at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse;

means for displaying the information to the consumer based on the selected at least one of the topical categories in the at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse.

47. [New] The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes business advertising.

48. [New] The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes coupons.

49. [New] The system of Claim 48, wherein the coupons are of limited duration.

50. [New] The system of Claim 46 further comprising means for monitoring the usage of the system.

51. [New] The system of Claim 50 which further comprises means for providing statistics regarding the usage of the system.

52. [New] The system of Claim 51 which further comprises means for calculating fees based on the usage of the system.

53. [New] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means to limit access to the information.

54. [New] The system of Claim 53 wherein the limiting means comprises a password required to access the information.

55. [New] The system of Claim 46, wherein the information includes job postings.

56. [New] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for providing extended services.

57. [New] The system of Claim 56 wherein the extended services include allowing commercial transactions.

58. [New] The system of Claim 46 wherein the at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse area selected by town name.

59. [New] The system of Claim 46 wherein the at least one of the plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse are selected by zip code.

60. [New] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for the consumer to directly contact the merchant.

61. [New] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means to allow for commercial transactions between the merchant and the consumer.

62. [New] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises means for the consumers to list items for sale, wherein the consumers select at least one topical category and at least one geographic area of smaller expanse in which to list the items.

63. [New] The system of Claim 46 which further comprises hyperlinks to allow the consumers to access websites of the merchants.

64. [New] A method for providing an on-line interactive web site for referring a consumer to one or more merchants comprising;

providing a series of web pages containing information organized into a hierarchy of geographic areas, wherein the hierarchy of geographic areas includes at least one geographic area of large expanse and a plurality of geographic areas of smaller expanse organized into at least one topical category;

providing means for the one or more merchants to connect to at least one web page of the series of web pages;

allowing the one or more merchants to select at least one of the geographic areas to list information pertaining to the one or more merchants;

allowing the one or more merchants to input the merchant information into the series of webpages;

connecting the consumer to the series of web pages;

prompting the consumer to select the at least one topical category from the at least one geographic area of smaller expanse from the hierarchy of geographic areas; and

displaying the merchant information in response to the geographic area and topical category inputted by the consumer.

65. [New] The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of monitoring the information that is accessed.

66. [New] The method of Claim 65 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing statistics regarding the information accessed.

67. [New] The method of Claim 65 wherein the method further comprises the step of calculating fees based on the information accessed.

68. [New] The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of providing extended services.

69. [New] The method of Claim 68 wherein the step of providing extended services comprises providing commercial transactions between the merchant and the consumer.

70. [New] The method of Claim 64 wherein the method further comprises the step of prompting for a password to access the information.

71. [New] The method of Claim 64 wherein the information includes at least one coupon.

72. [New] The method of Claim 71 which further comprises the step of providing a set time period for the at least one coupon to be listed on at least one of the series of web pages, wherein the at least one coupon will automatically expire upon expiration of the set time period.

73. [New] The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of generating revenue from the one or merchants for listing the merchant information in the hierarchy of geographic areas and topical categories.

74. [New] The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of providing means for the one or more merchants to update or edit the merchant information.

75. The method of Claim 64 which further comprises the step of providing means for the consumers to access websites of the one or more merchants